

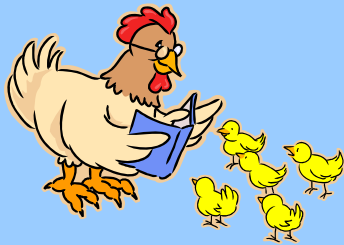


# Literacy Links

September, 2005  
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## Monthly E-Newsletter of Maine Reading First

*This is the third newsletter which is being devoted to one of the five essential elements of reading instruction. The May, 2005 edition of "Literacy Links" provided an in-depth look at reading **fluency** and the June, 2005 edition provided an in-depth look at **vocabulary**. This month's edition of "Literacy Links" focuses on **phonemic awareness**.*



*"Before children can make any sense of the alphabetic principle, they must understand that those sounds that are paired with the letters are one and the same as the sounds of speech."*

Marilyn Jager Adams,  
Barbara Foorman, Ingvar  
Lundberg, and Terri  
Beeler, 1998



## Spotlight on... Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness is a small subset of the larger concept of phonological awareness. Phonological awareness is a broad term which refers to the awareness of sounds in oral language. It includes the ability to detect and produce rhyme and alliteration. In addition, phonological awareness includes an understanding that sentences are composed of words; that words are composed of syllables and onset-rime chunks; and that words are composed of individual sounds or phonemes. A student who demonstrates phonological awareness can successfully segment, blend, and manipulate words or sounds at any of these levels.

The most complex level of phonological awareness—the recognition that words are composed of phonemes and the ability to manipulate these phonemes—is termed *phonemic awareness*. A student who is phonemically aware can successfully complete the following tasks:

- Segment the word *grass* into its 4 phonemes—/g/ /r/ /ă/ /s/
- Blend the 3 phonemes /b/ /ŭ/ /g/ into the word *bug*
- Delete the first sound in *hat* to make the word *at*
- Change the last sound in *hen* to /d/ to make the word *head*  
(Placement of letters within / / indicates the sound, not the name, of the letter.)

Phonological and phonemic awareness are not the same as phonics. Phonological and phonemic awareness are based on the sounds of spoken language; phonics is based on the connection between these sounds and the letters that represent them in written language. Success with phonemic awareness provides the foundation for phonics because students who are phonemically aware can then more easily make the connection between sounds and letters. Phonemic awareness is typically included in instruction during Kindergarten and Grade 1 so this connection is mastered for students early in their reading development. Segmenting and blending are the two types of phoneme manipulation which most closely correspond with the skills needed to decode text while reading or encode text while writing. Therefore, phonemic awareness instruction should highlight the processes of segmenting and blending phonemes in words. Phonemic awareness is one of the five essential elements of reading within a balanced literacy program and therefore phonemic awareness instruction by itself does not constitute a complete reading program.

## Upcoming Events

The 57<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the New England Reading Association (NERA), "Bridging Research and Practice", will be held in 2 locations:

- Marlborough, MA on October 19-20, 2005
- Fairlee, VT on October 20-21, 2005

Additional details and registration information about the NERA conference can be found on their website:

[www.nereading.org](http://www.nereading.org)

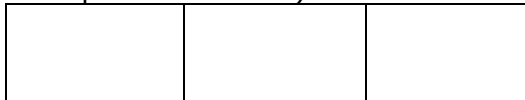


## Summary of Professional Literacy Text... Phonemic Awareness in Young Children

Some of the leading experts in the field of phonemic awareness (Marilyn Jager Adams, Barbara Foorman, Ingvar Lundberg, and Terri Beeler) have collaborated to create a curriculum resource book which includes a wealth of activities. The activities included in *Phonemic Awareness in Young Children* are developmentally sequenced through the different levels of phonological awareness beginning with listening and rhyming games. The next chapters share activities to build students' awareness of words in sentences and syllables in words. Phonemic awareness activities are presented that include sound identification, segmenting, blending, and manipulation. A section on assessing phonological awareness is also included to provide information about which activities would best support students' current phonemic awareness needs. The assessment section also encourages frequent monitoring of progress as students participate in the tasks so the instruction closely matches their developmental abilities. Several appendices include supporting materials and appear at the end of this resource book. Additional information and details about the content of *Phonemic Awareness in Young Children* can be obtained at <http://www.brookespublishing.com/store/books/adams-3211/index.htm>

## Description of Instructional Idea... Elkonin Sound Boxes

A Russian psychologist, D. B. Elkonin, developed sound boxes as an instructional technique which can quickly and easily teach students to segment the individual sounds (or phonemes) of words. Students can use pre-made sound boxes (a row of connected boxes corresponding to the number of phonemes within a word—see below for an example which would be used for three-phoneme words).



Students can also create their own sound boxes on a sheet of paper or a dry-erase board. Students begin by placing one counter below each box within the sound box. When orally given a word, students first repeat the word and then move the counters one at a time up into the sound boxes in a left-to-right progression as they slowly segment the phonemes in the word. Instead of orally reciting words for sound boxes, picture cards can be used. After students segment the phonemes in the word using the sound box, they blend the sounds back together and say the word normally as they move their fingers along the bottom of the sound box. This final step of blending the word assists students in realizing that words should be blended back into wholes after the individual parts are segmented.

For example, when given the word *dog*, students would move a counter up into the first sound box as they articulate /d/. Students would then move the next counter up into the second sound box as they articulate /ŏ/. Finally, students would move the last counter up in the third sound box as they articulate /g/. Students would complete this task by saying the word *dog* as they slide their finger under the counters in the sound box.

*"Woof! Woof! This is how many children respond when asked to tell the sounds they hear in the word dog. Though many children enter school with a substantial vocabulary, adequate syntax, and clear speech pronunciation, few are phonemically aware."*

Author Unknown

## News from Maine Reading First...

Welcome back to a new school year!

Maine Reading First is excited to announce there are now 17 Reading First schools in the state of Maine. Ten new schools were awarded Maine Reading First sub-grants last spring.

Maine Reading First is also pleased to share that the professional development events held during the summer were a huge success! The two Maine Reading First Summer Institutes each attracted approximately 100 enthusiastic educators from across the state. Over 60 participants enjoyed the Maine Reading First Seminar for School Leaders.

Stay tuned for details about the professional development offerings over the course of the 2005-2006 school year and during the summer of 2006!

### Check it out...

The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) with support from the United States Department of Education has created a quarterly newsletter, "Reading First Notebook". The themed issues of this newsletter share articles and information on various topics. Links to new resources and articles are also included. The Winter, 2004 edition explores the "Three *Must-Haves* for Early Reading Instruction". The direct link for this edition is [http://www.readingfirstsupport.us/docs/RF-Notebook-1204\\_1.pdf](http://www.readingfirstsupport.us/docs/RF-Notebook-1204_1.pdf) The Spring, 2005 edition is guided by the question "What is Instructional Leadership and Why is it So Important?" The direct link for this edition is <http://www.readingfirstsupport.us/docs/RF-notebook-0305.pdf> The Summer, 2005 edition is devoted to "Why is Professional Development So Important?" The direct link for this edition is <http://www.readingfirstsupport.us/docs/RF-summer-05.pdf>



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Click here to view the Maine Reading First website  
<http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/homepage.htm>